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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ET](#) [SO](#)  
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA ENGAGED IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH  
MODERATE SOMALI ISLAMIC COURT MEMBERS

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin called in Ambassador January 19 to discuss Somalia. With legal advisor Minelik present, Seyoum told the Ambassador that Ethiopia has over the past several months approached moderate elements of the former Islamic Courts Union (ICU) of Somalia. Meetings have reportedly taken place in Djibouti, the Persian Gulf and even in Asmara. MFA Chief of Staff Abdeta and National Intelligence Officers are currently in Dubai meeting with supporters of former ICU leader Sheikh Shariff. The next meeting will be with all of the various factions of the moderate wing of the former ICU, most likely in Yemen or Saudi Arabia. This breakthrough, Seyoum said, offers the best hope of bringing in support for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu. The TFG is not involved in the meetings yet, but will participate in the future.

¶2. (S/NF) A sticking point has been demands by the ICU moderates for equal political footing with the TFG. Seyoum said this is not for Ethiopia to consider, but the TFG. The ICU must first embrace the Transitional Federal Charter which established the TFG. This would be the precondition by the TFG for full interaction between the ICU and TFG. Seyoum lamented that there are too many countries involved in meeting with the moderates of the ICU. Seyoum argued that Saudi Arabia, Italy, the UN, and others have not sent consistent messages to the moderates and it appears that they are shopping for the best deal that will help them vis-a-vis the TFG in regaining authority in Somalia.

¶3. (S/NF) Seyoum said the time was right for a rapprochement between the TFG and ICU moderates because the moderate elements were frustrated with Eritrea's restrictions on their movement and were finding ways to leave Asmara. The Eritreans have kept some members in Eritrea, making it difficult for them to leave until those members who are traveling have returned to Asmara, according to Seyoum. The breakthrough with the moderate ICU members occurred with contacts made in Djibouti through Abu Baker Adane, an Abgaal clan elder and main financier for the ICU. His disenchantment reportedly led him to help the Ethiopians make contact with other moderate elements of the ICU. Abu Baker Adane's son, a U.S. educated businessman who looks after the families business in Dubai, Asia and the U.S., helps negotiate between Ethiopia and his father.

¶4. (S/NF) Seyoum said if this political approach is successful, it will complement the current ongoing training

of TFG troops from various clans by Ethiopia and capacity building of TFG officials in the various ministries by the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Seyoum reminded the Ambassador of his argument to Secretary Rice on December 5, that Saudi Arabia is a key player. They can provide the necessary funding for the TFG troops to ensure that they remain together, working cooperatively in the integrated brigades (made up various Somali clans).

COMMENT

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15. (S/NF) Seyoum's reported breakthrough in discussions with moderate elements of the ICU offers the best chance to help stabilize Somalia and allow Ethiopian troops to depart Somalia. Prime Minister Meles has made it clear to us that he does not see the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) as a viable force that would enable Ethiopian troops to leave Somalia. Training of TFG troops, payment of salaries by Saudi Arabia or developing a mechanism for payment of salaries, and bringing in support from ICU moderate elements offers the best hope for Ethiopia to extricate itself from the expensive burden of Somalia operations. End Comment.  
YAMAMOTO